



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2004-73 B

Monday, May 10, 2004

Re-issued Monday, May 24, 2004

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DPI selected for Thai/Laos teacher grant
Wisconsin educators to visit homelands of many immigrant students

MADISON—Senator Herbert S. Kohl and State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster recently announced the selection of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to lead a Fulbright Study Seminar to Laos and Thailand this summer. Currently, Wisconsin schools enroll more than 12,000 students of Southeast Asian heritage, including young people with Thai, Hmong, Lao, Mien, Cambodian, and Vietnamese backgrounds.

The seminar, “Highlighting Southeast Asia Heritage and Culture in the Curriculum,” will give 17 Wisconsin educators an opportunity to visit two of the countries that were homes to many of these new immigrants. “We are honored to receive this grant,” said Burmaster. “It is so important for Wisconsin teachers to understand the rich cultures our children come from and the remarkable challenges that their families have faced before coming to Wisconsin. We want all Wisconsin students to understand how important this part of the world is from an environmental, economic, and humanitarian perspective.”

Leading the delegation will be DPI Deputy State Superintendent Tony Evers, assisted by DPI’s Bilingual / English Language Learners (ELL) Consultant Seree Weroha. With life experience in Southeast Asia, Weroha is proficient in the Thai, Lao, Hmong, and Lue languages.

The study seminar is scheduled for June 18-July 23 and will include a visit to the Wat Tham Krabok resettlement camp near Saraburi in Thailand. Because of the closing of this resettlement camp, more than 1,500 new Hmong students are scheduled to arrive in Wisconsin starting July 1. The seminar also will visit Bangkok schools and teacher training centers, schools in the northern hill tribe areas around Chiang Mai, as well as in I-San, the northeastern part of Thailand. Educators also will travel to Laos to

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visit education sites in Vientiane and Luang Prabang, the old royal capital of Laos, now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Funding for the seminar is part of the U.S. Department of Education's Fulbright Hays Group Seminars Abroad Program, which strives to help educators increase their knowledge about culture, politics, and economics in important parts of the world, particularly in areas less accessible to tourists. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Southeast Asia also are lending their expertise.

Photographs of seminar participants may be viewed and downloaded at <
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/sprntdnt/phthailand.html>>.

Educators selected for the international seminar include:

- Khampheua Ayala, literacy coach, Wisconsin Avenue Elementary School, Milwaukee;
- Sombath Bounket, counselor and mathematics teacher, Washington High School, Milwaukee;
- Sydney Chang, district interpreter, Sheboygan Area School District;
- Brian Driscoll, fourth- and fifth-grade bilingual team teacher, Sandburg Elementary School, Madison;
- Gail Essex of Oak Creek, reading and language arts teacher, South Milwaukee Middle School;
- Elizabeth Folberg of Wausau, English language learner and French teacher, D.C. Everest Middle School, Weston;
- Laty Keodouangsy, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UW-Milwaukee;
- Pao Lor of Appleton, assistant principal and language arts teacher, Neenah High School;
- Joseph Nigh, bilingual education teacher, East High School, Madison;
- Kalyani Rai, assistant professor, UW-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education;
- Maira Rivera, bilingual mathematics and science teacher, Cherokee Middle School, Madison;
- Amy Silha of Greenville, language, science, and social studies teacher, Jefferson Elementary School, Appleton;
- Gwaub Thao, middle school bilingual teacher, Milwaukee Education Center, Milwaukee;
- Mang Thao, geography and language arts teacher, Horace Mann Middle School, Wausau;
- Michelle Trevino, literacy coach, South Division High School, Milwaukee;
- Bee Lor Vang, fourth- and fifth-grade teacher, Jefferson Elementary School, Oshkosh; and
- Chia Vang, bilingual teacher, Johnson Elementary School, Appleton.